

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8794
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MUNICH
USMISSION NATO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, UR
SUBJECT: BREZHNEV SUCCEEDS PODGORNYY AS SOVIET CHIEF OF STATE

1. AT OPENING JOINT SESSION OF THE TWO CHAMBERS OF
USSR SUPREME SOVIET ON JUNE 16, PODGORNYY WAS RELIVED
AS CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDUM " IN CONNECTION WITH HIS RETIRE-
MENT ON PENSION." "DEPUTY" BREZHNEV WAS THEN ELECTED
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CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDUM.

2. ACCORDING TO TASS, DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF USSR COUNCIL
OF MINISTERS ZIYA NURIYEV IN HIS REPORT TO THE
SESSION PAID TRIBUTE TO BREZHNEV AND NOTED THAT
HIS ELECTION WOULD SERVE CAUSE OF COMMUNIST
CONSTRUCTION AND THE CAUSE OF PEACE THROUGHOUT

THE WORLD. HE NOTED THAT CURRENT SESSION OF THE SUPREME SOVIET COMES AT A REMARKABLE TIME IN SOVIET HISTORY, DURING THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF OCTOBER AND INTRODUCTION OF NEW CONSTITUTION, TO WHICH BREZHNEV HAD MADE AN "INESTIMABLE CONTRIBUTION."

3. SUSLOV DELIVERED SPEECH IN PRAISE OF BREZHNEV AND NOMINATED HIM TO POST OF CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDUM. MOTION WAS ADOPTED BY ACCLAMATION.

4. BREZHNEV, INTRODUCED AS CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDUM, THEN MADE BRIEF ACCEPTANCE SPEECH. BREZHNEV NOTED THAT HIS NEW POST "IS NOT AN EASY ONE" BUT THAT HE SUBMITS TO THE WILL OF PARTY AND PEOPLE. HE EXPRESSED DETERMINATION TO BE WORTHY OF HONOR CONFERRED ON HIM IN SERVING SOVIET PEOPLE AND THE CAUSE OF PEACE.

5. SESSION ENDED WITH NOMINATION AND ELECTION OF I. E. POLYAKOV OF BELORUSSIAN SSR AS A DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF PRESIDUM. HE REPLACES IN THIS POST F.A. SURGANOV, THE FORMER BELORUSSIAN REPRESENTATIVE ON THE PRESIDUM. SURGANOV HAD DIED BETWEEN SESSIONS OF THE SUPREME SOVIET.

6. JUNE 16 PRAVDA HAD SET THE STAGE FOR ELECTION WITH UNUSUALLY HEAVY COVERAGE OF LEONID IL'ICH. FRONT PAGE CARRIED HIS NAME IN HEAVY TYPE ABOVE HIS INTERVIEW WITH LE MONDE. REPORTS AT BOTTOM OF THAT PAGE THAT BREZHNEV RECEIVED JAPANESE MINISTER OF LABOR AND INDIAN AMBASSADOR CARRIED HIS NAME OVER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EACH ITEM. ON INSIDE PAGES, THE MAGIC NAME AGAIN APPEARED OVER CONTINUATION OF LE MONDE INTERVIEW AND OVER STORY ABOUT BREZHNEV'S FORTHCOMING VISIT TO FRANCE.

7. COMMENT: BREZHNEV HAS CHOSEN TO BECOME CHIEF OF STATE IN ADDITION TO HIS OTHER DUTIES WITHOUT WAITING FOR THE ADOPTION OF THE NEW CONSTITUTION AND THE FORMAL CELEBRATION OF THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE OCTOBER REVOLUTION. THIS SESSION OF THE SUPREME SOVIET WAS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY SINCE PODGORNY'S REMOVAL FROM THE POLITBURO AT WHICH BREZHNEV COULD HAVE BECOME CHIEF OF STATE. ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS FOR HIS DOING SO AT THIS TIME RELATES TO HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO FRANCE WHICH BEGINS JUNE 20. BREZHNEV'S OWN VANITY IS CLEARLY SERVED BY HIS TRAVELLING TO FRANCE AS DE JURE HEAD OF STATE. A SECOND IMPORTANT REASON FOR BREZHNEV TO MOVE NOW IS THE DESIRE TO END THE PUBLIC SPECULATION OVER THE

NEXT STEPS TO BE TAKEN. BY MOVING NOW, BREZHNEV CUTS SHORT ANY SPECULATION THAT KOGYGIN (OR KIRILENKO OR SUSLOV) MIGHT BECOME HEAD OF STATE. IN THIS CONNECTION WE NOTED THAT SUSLOV, WHOM SOME PRESUME TO BE BREZHNEV'S RIVAL, MADE THE NOMINATING SPEECH, THUS INDICATING FULL POLITBURO SUPPORT FOR BREZHNEV'S MOVE. SPECULATION WILL NOW CENTER ON WHO WILL BE THE FIRST DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF THE PRESIDUM WHEN THE NEW CONSTITUTION IS ADOPTED. IN THE MONTHS BETWEEN NOW AND OCTOBER, BREZHNEV CAN PROBABLY RELY ON BEING ON VACATION OR SIMPLY UNAVAILABLE FOR MOST OF THE TAXING PROTOCOLARY FUNCTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH HIS NEW JOB. END COMMENT. TOON

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